



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Western Washington Fish and Wildlife Office
510 Desmond Drive SE, Suite 102
Lacey, Washington 98503

September 12, 2006

Dear Interested Party:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wants to inform you a series of of public scoping meetings under the National Environmental Policy Act. The purpose of the meeting is to gather information to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement, related to an anticipated application for a permit amendment from the Washington Department of Natural Resources for its 1997 Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for forested State trust lands. The application would be associated with the proposed replacement of the marbled murrelet interim conservation strategy, which is currently being implemented, with a proposed long-term conservation strategy for marbled murrelets in southwest Washington and the Olympic Peninsula. The marbled murrelet is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. This amendment process pertains to this species only.

In 1997 the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service approved an Incidental Take Permit for the Washington Department of Natural Resources HCP, as authorized under section 10 of the Endangered Species Act. This multi-species HCP covers 1.6 million acres within the range of the northern spotted owl in Washington. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service are the Federal agencies responsible for administering the Endangered Species Act. For this HCP amendment, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will need to determine whether to approve the amendment.

One requirement in this Federal decision-making process is that an environmental review must be conducted, and must follow procedures set forth in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Involving the public and other local, state, and Federal agencies in project planning and federal decision-making is one of the primary purposes of the NEPA.

With this letter we are requesting your assistance in the planning of this project during a 45-day public scoping period. During this scoping period we are seeking information and suggestions on the scope of issues to include in the Environmental Impact Statement for this amendment process. Basic background information relating to the project will be provided in a public notice, to be published on September 15, 2006, in the Federal Register.

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Public scoping meetings will be held on the following dates:

September 26, 2006 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Forks, Washington Olympic Natural Resources Center, 1455 South Forks Avenue

September 28, 2006 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.-

Mt. Vernon, Washington Cotton Tree Inn, 2300 Market Street

October 4, 2006 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

South Bend, Washington Willapa Harbor Community Center, 916 First Street

October 5, 2006 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Lacey, Washington Lacey Community Center, 6729 Pacific Avenue SE

The information gathered during this scoping period will contribute to the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement. That document, along with a draft long-term marbled murrelet conservation strategy will be circulated for public review and comment in 2007.

All comments concerning the preparation of the draft Environmental Impact Statement, proposed draft HCP amendment, and NEPA process should be addressed to: Washington Department of Natural Resources, SEPA Center, ATTN: Marbled Murrelet Long-term Conservation Strategy, c/o Mark Ostwald, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 47015, Olympia, Washington 98504-7015; facsimile: (360) 902-1789. For further information contact Mark Ostwald, of my staff, at (360) 753-9564.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken S. Berg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ken" and last name "Berg" clearly distinguishable.

Ken S. Berg, Manager
Western Washington Fish and Wildlife Office